



Massachusetts  
Department  
of  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

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Environmental Protection  
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Acting Commissioner

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This information is available in  
alternate format by calling our

ADA Coordinator at  
(617) 574-6872.

# fact sheet

## Noise

### Background

Noise is a type of air pollution that results from sounds that cause a nuisance, are or could injure public health, or unreasonably interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life, property, or the conduct of business.

Types of sounds that may cause noise include:

- “Loud” continuous sounds from industrial or commercial activity, demolition, or highly amplified music;
- Sounds in narrow frequency ranges such as “squealing” fans or other rotary equipment; and
- Intermittent or “impact” sounds such as those from pile drivers, jackhammers, slamming truck tailgates, public address systems, etc.

### Policy

A noise source will be considered to be violating the Department’s noise regulation (310 CMR 7.10) if the source:

1. Increases the broadband sound level by more than 10 dB(A) above ambient, or
2. Produce a “pure tone” condition – when any octave band center frequency sound pressure level exceeds the two adjacent center frequency sound pressure levels by 3 decibels or more.

These criteria are measured both at the property line and at the nearest inhabited residence. “Ambient” is defined as the background A-weighted sound level that is exceeded 90% of the time, measured during equipment operating hours. “Ambient” may also be established by other means with consent of the Department.

### For more information:

For complaints about specific noise sources, call the Board of Health for the municipality in which the noise source is located.

To learn more about responding to noise, odor and dust complaints or to request state assistance or support, please contact the service center in the nearest DEP regional office.

- Central Region, Worcester: (508) 792-7683
- Northeast Region, Wilmington: (978) 661-7677
- Southeast Region, Lakeville: (508) 946-2714
- Western Region, Springfield: (413) 755-2214

*This Policy was originally adopted by the MA Department of Public Health in the early 1970’s. It was reaffirmed by DEP’s Division of Air Quality Control on February 1, 1990, and has remained in effect.*